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(54) **OVERMOLDED ECU DEVICE**

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Primary Examiner — James Hook

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G01M 3/32 (2006.01)

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(2013.01); **G01M 3/3209** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

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USPC **138/89**, **90**

See application file for complete search history.

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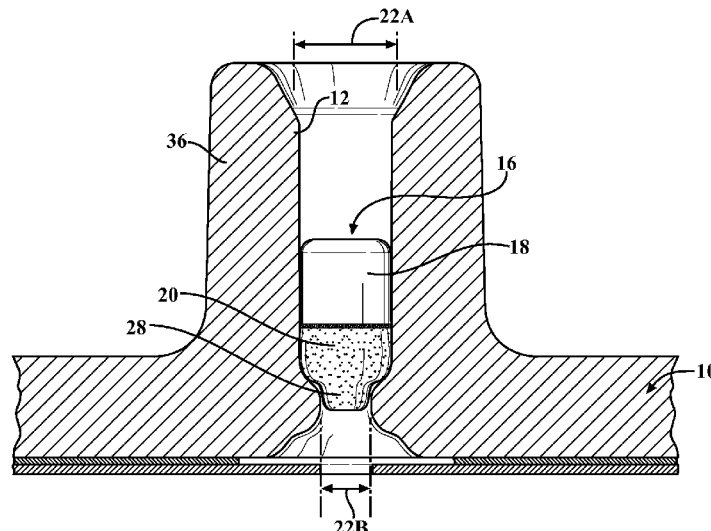
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ABSTRACT

A sealing device which is used to seal a leak test aperture in an ECU. The sealing device is selectively disposed in the leak test aperture, and an inner surface is formed as part of the leak test aperture. The sealing device has a first portion, and a second portion connected to the first portion. The sealing device is press-fitted into the leak aperture such that the first portion is in contact with the inner surface, securing the position of the sealing device in the leak test aperture, and the second portion is also in contact with the inner surface to prevent moisture and debris from passing through the leak test aperture. The second diameter is larger than the first diameter aperture such that the second diameter of the second portion applies a pressure to the inner surface of the leak test aperture, forming a seal.

10 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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Page 2

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FIG. 1

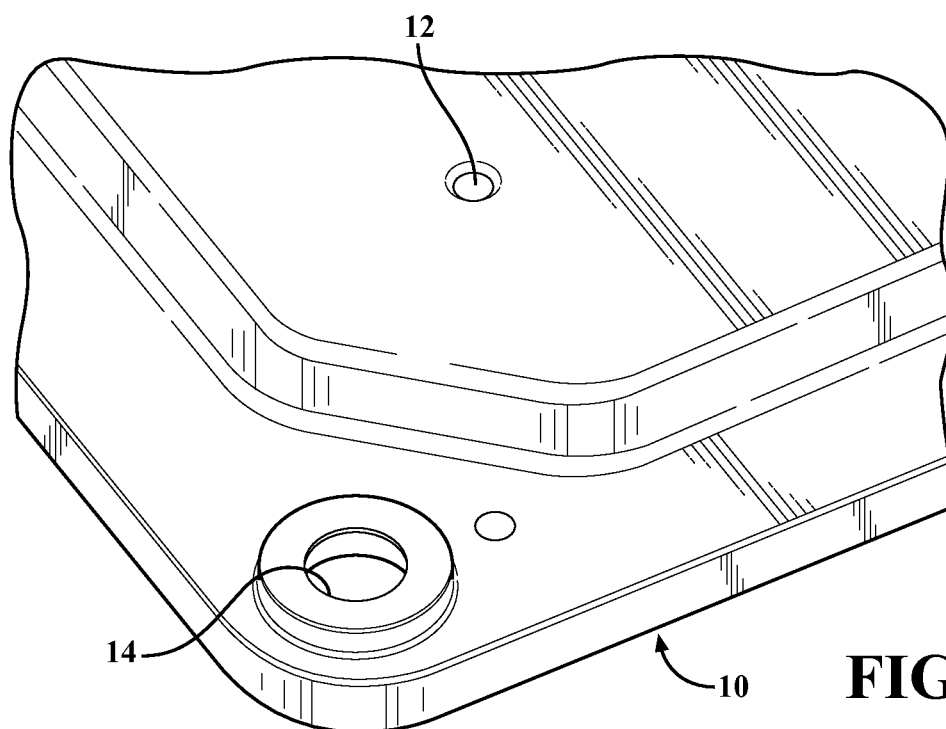
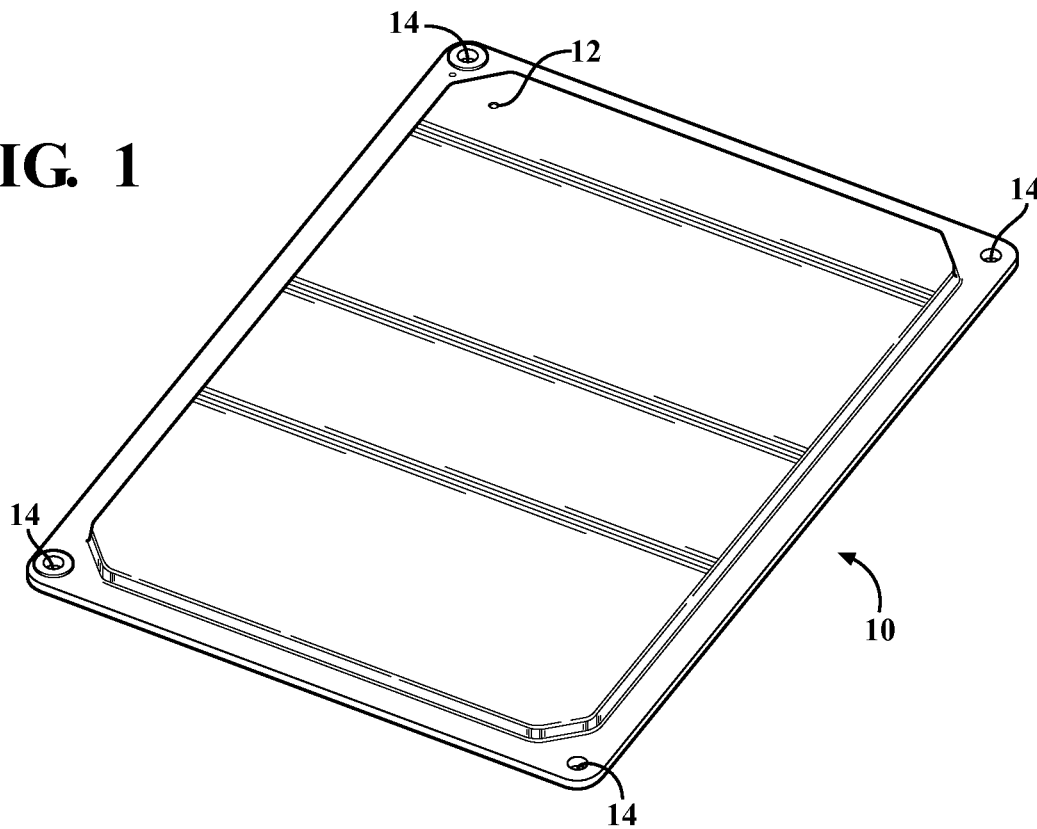


FIG. 2

FIG. 3

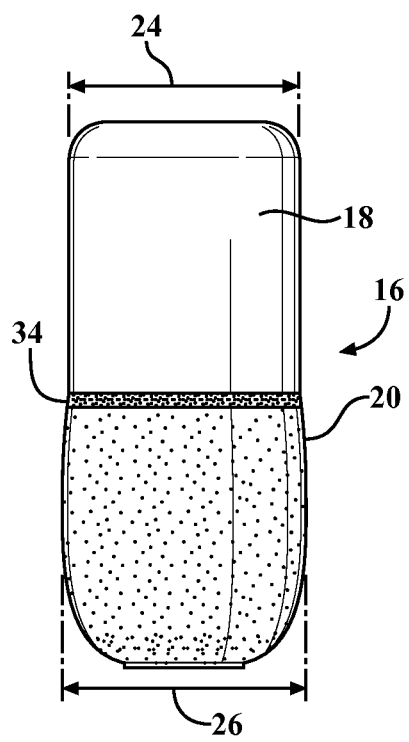
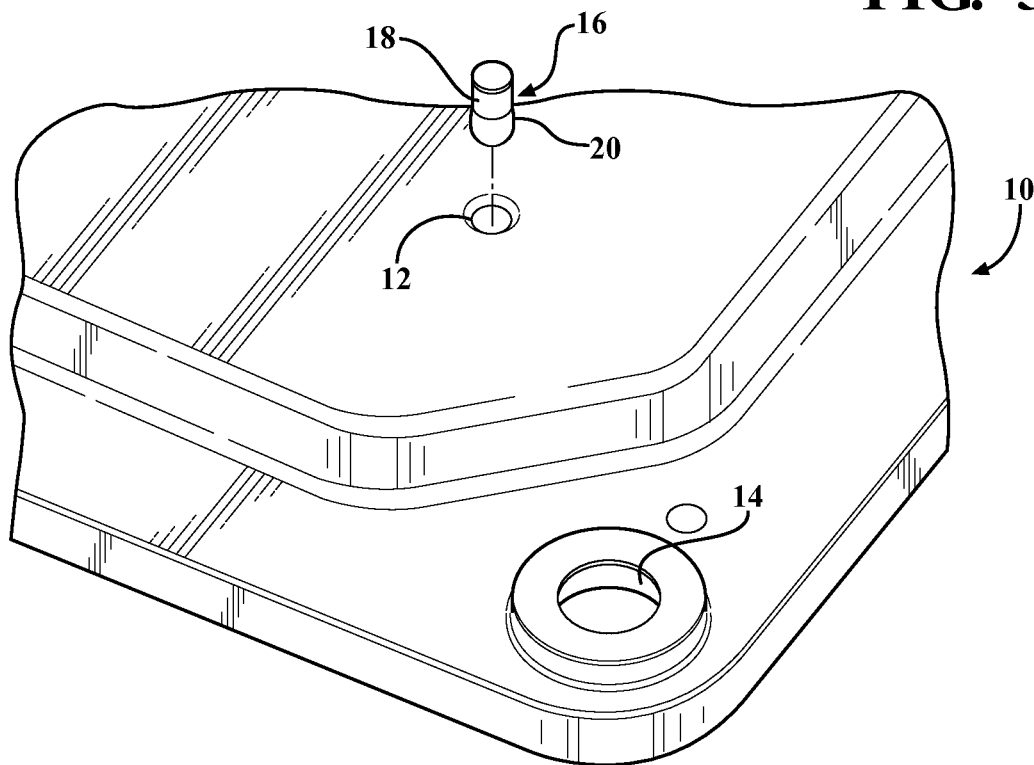


FIG. 4

FIG. 5

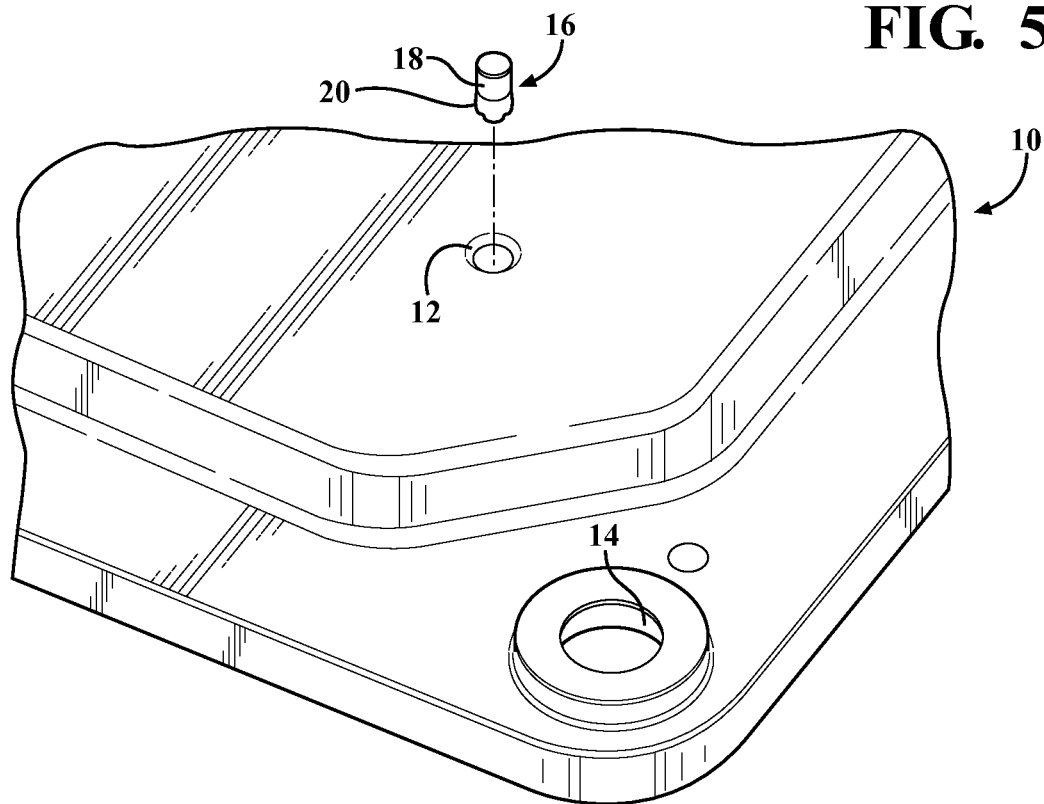


FIG. 6

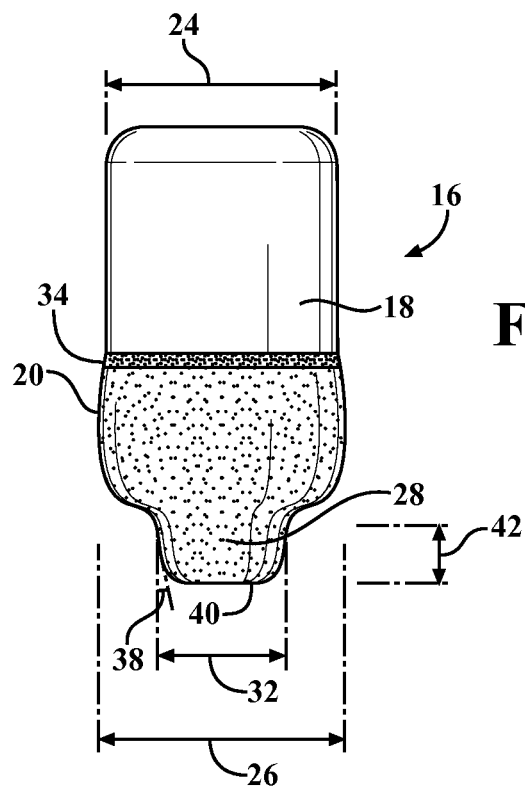


FIG. 7

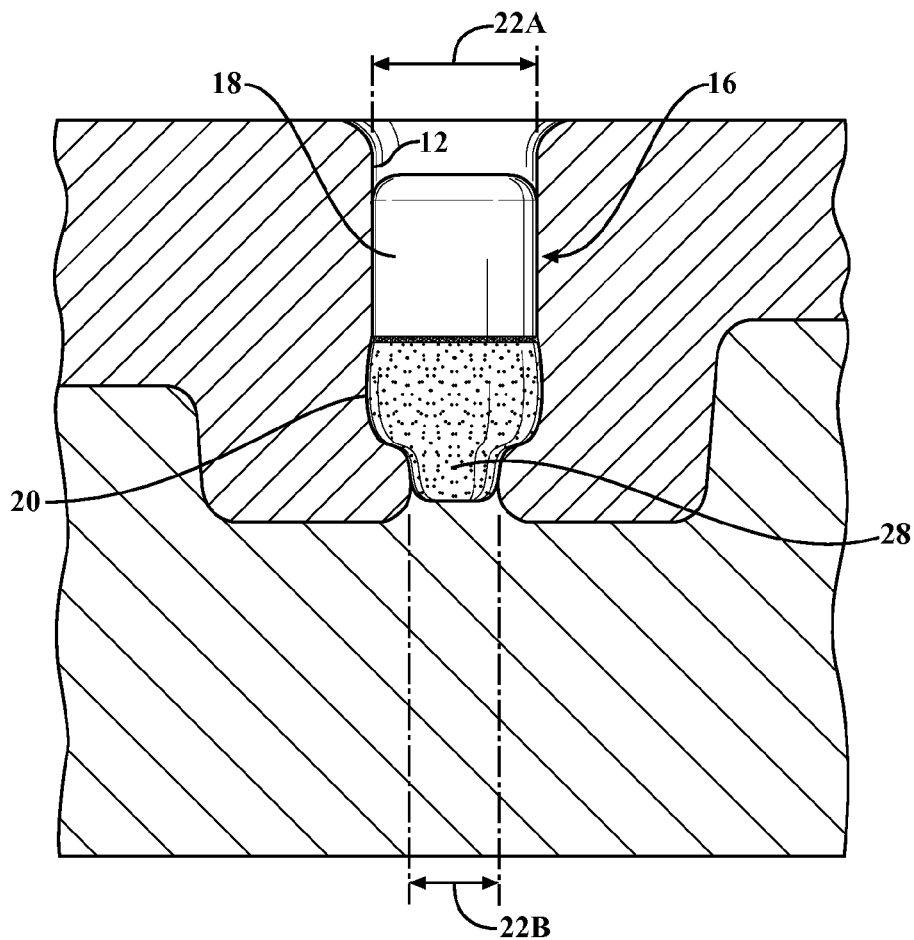
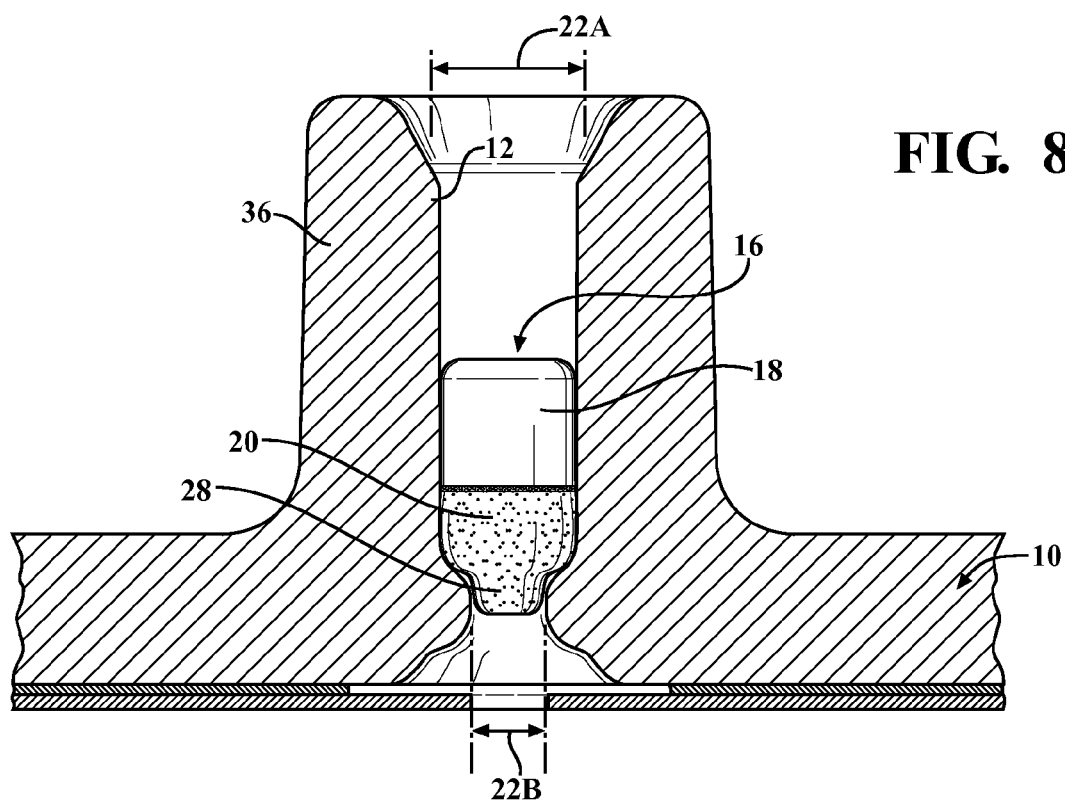


FIG. 8



1

OVERMOLDED ECU DEVICE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

Embodiments of the invention relate to a sealing device for sealing a leak test aperture formed as part of a housing of an engine controller.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

An Electronic Control Unit (ECU) is used in many different types of vehicles to provide control over the operation of various components. The ECU is used to control various actuators which are part of an engine to optimize the operation of the engine. The ECU controls air-fuel mixture, ignition timing, idle speed, and in some more advanced versions of an ECU, variable valve timing, transient fueling, maximum RPM, and the like, are also controlled by the ECU.

The ECU is often required to function in a harsh environment, where the ECU may be exposed to different temperatures, as well as moisture. The ECU includes a cover which is part of a casing, and after assembly, the casing is tested for leaks to make sure that no moisture or debris is able to enter into the casing and damage any internal components. One type of approach to test the ECU for leaks is to force pressurized air into an aperture formed as part of the cover, referred to as a "leak test aperture," and determine if any air leaks out of the casing. Once the test is complete, a seal is deposited into the aperture.

However, current seals used in leak test apertures do not adequately provide assurance that the leak test aperture is sealed. Some of these seals do not provide an adequate sealing function due to die casting surface irregularities in the leak test aperture. Also, the location of the seal in the leak test aperture may not always be known once the ECU is assembled, making it difficult to determine whether the leak test aperture is in fact sealed.

Accordingly, there exists a need for an improved sealing of a leak test aperture once the assembly of the ECU is completed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a sealing device which is used to seal a leak test aperture in an ECU. In one embodiment, the present invention is an assembly for sealing an aperture, which includes a sealing device selectively disposed in a leak test aperture having an inner surface. The sealing device has a first portion and a second portion connected to the first portion. The first portion of the sealing device has a first diameter, and the second portion has a second diameter. The sealing device is press-fitted into the leak aperture such that the first diameter is in contact with the inner surface, securing the position of the sealing device in the leak test aperture.

When the sealing device is disposed in the leak test aperture, the second diameter is also in contact with the inner surface to prevent moisture and debris from passing through the leak test aperture. The second diameter is larger than the first diameter such that the second diameter of the second portion applies a pressure to the inner surface of the leak test aperture, forming a seal.

In one embodiment, a tapered portion is formed as part of the second portion such that the tapered portion is smaller than the second diameter, and a lower diameter is formed as part of the leak test aperture. The tapered portion is disposed in the lower diameter of the leak test aperture when the sealing device is disposed in the leak test aperture.

2

The first portion is made of metal, such as steel or aluminum, and the second portion is made of a sealing material, such as silicone rubber (VMQ), acrylonitrile-butadiene rubber (NBR), styrene-butadiene rubber (SBR), ethylene propylene diene rubber (EPDM), other types of synthetic rubber, and the like.

Further areas of applicability of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description provided hereinafter. It should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating the preferred embodiment of the invention, are intended for purposes of illustration only and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed description and the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is perspective view of a cover for an ECU having a leak test aperture which is capable of receiving a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged perspective view of a cover for an ECU having a leak test aperture which is capable of receiving a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged perspective view of a cover for an ECU and a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a side view of a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is perspective view of a cover for an ECU having a leak test aperture which is capable of receiving an alternate embodiment of a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a side view of an alternate embodiment of a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a sectional side view of a cover for an ECU and an alternate embodiment of a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention; and

FIG. 8 is a sectional side view of second type of cover used with an alternate embodiment of a sealing device, according to embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The following description of the preferred embodiment(s) is merely exemplary in nature and is in no way intended to limit the invention, its application, or uses.

A cover which is used with an overmolded sealing device according to the present invention is shown in FIGS. 1-3 generally at 10. The cover 10 includes a leak test aperture 12, and several assembly apertures 14 which are used for connecting the cover 10 to the rest of a housing (not shown) of an electronic control unit (ECU). Selectively disposed in the leak test aperture 12 is a sealing device, shown generally at 16 in FIGS. 3-4. The sealing device 16 includes a first portion 18 and a second portion 20. The first portion 18 is made of metal, such as steel, and the second portion 20 is made of a sealing material, which in this embodiment is silicone rubber (VMQ). However, it is within the scope of the invention that other types of materials may be used, such as acrylonitrile-butadiene rubber (NBR), styrene-butadiene rubber (SBR), ethylene propylene diene rubber (EPDM), other types of synthetic rubber, and the like.

3

The first portion **18** is substantially cylindrical in shape, but may be other shapes to correspond to the shape of different leak test apertures in different covers. The second portion **20** is also substantially cylindrical in shape, but is flexible to contact the inner surface **22** of the aperture **12**. During assembly, the device **16** is press-fitted into the aperture **12** using the first portion **18**, and is held in place by the first portion contacting the inner surface **22** because of the press-fit. The aperture **12** has an upper diameter **22A**, which is sized to allow for a press-fit of the device **16**.

In the embodiment of the sealing device **16** shown in FIG. **4**, the first portion **18** has a first diameter **24**, and the second portion **20** has a second diameter **26**, which in this embodiment is larger than the first diameter **24** to provide an adequate seal. The second portion **20** shown in FIG. **4** has a varying diameter, and the second diameter **26** is the largest diameter of the second portion **20**. However, it is within the scope of the invention that other size diameters for both the first portion **18** and the second portion **20** may be used.

When the device **16** is press-fitted into the aperture **12**, the first diameter **24** of the first portion **18** contacts the inner surface **22** of the aperture **12**, maintaining the position of the device **16** in the aperture **12**. The second portion **20** is also pressed against the inner surface **22** of the aperture **12**, providing a sealing function. The second diameter **26** is large enough such that the second portion **20** applies pressure to the inner surface **22**, creating a seal, preventing moisture or debris from passing through the aperture **12**, and entering into the housing.

Another embodiment of the sealing device **16** is shown in FIGS. **5-7**. In this embodiment, the second portion **20** not only has the second diameter **26**, but a part of the second portion **20** has a tapered portion **28**, where the widest diameter portion **32** of the tapered portion **28** is less than the second diameter **26**. The tapered portion **28** tapers at an angle **38**. The size of the angle **38** may vary, depending upon the desired shape of the tapered portion **28**. Additionally, the tapered portion **28** has a thickness **42** between an end surface **40** and the widest part of the widest diameter portion **28**. The thickness **42** may vary, depending upon the size of the tapered portion **28** and the size of the second portion **20** which is desired.

The sealing device **16** shown in FIGS. **5-7** is suitable for use with a leak test aperture **12** having a lower diameter **22B**. When the sealing device **16** is press-fitted into the aperture **12**, the first diameter portion **18** contacts the inner surface **22** of the aperture **12** to maintain the position of the device **16** in the aperture **12**, and the second portion **20** also contacts the inner surface **22** of the aperture **12** to provide a sealing function. However, the part of the second portion **20** that has the tapered portion **28** extends into the lower diameter **22B**, to provide further sealing. The lower diameter **22B** also reduces the risk that moisture and debris could enter the housing through the leak test aperture **12**.

Another type of cover **10** is shown in FIG. **8**, where the cover **10** is used for a different type of housing. The cover **10** shown in FIG. **8** is used with the embodiment of the sealing device **16** shown in FIG. **6**. In this embodiment, the cover **10** also includes a leak test aperture **12**, but the leak test aperture **12** has a cylindrical sidewall **36** which extends outwardly away from the cover **10**. The leak test aperture **12** in this embodiment also has an upper diameter **22A** and a lower diameter **22B**. When assembled, the sealing device **16** is press-fitted into the aperture **12**, and the second portion **20** contacts the upper diameter **22A**, and the tapered portion **28** is disposed in the lower diameter **22B**. The first portion **18**, second portion **20**, and tapered portion **28** may be shaped to fit

4

into differently shaped leak test apertures, making the sealing device **16** suitable for different applications.

In one embodiment, the first portion **18** and the second portion **20** are connected together through the use of an adhesive **34**. However, in other embodiments, the portions **18,20** may be connected together in different ways. A combination of different shapes of the first portion **18** and second portion **20** may provide for a connection such as an interference fit between the first portion **18** and the second portion **20**. For example, the first portion **18** may have a protrusion with a hook or flange that is received into a complementary-shaped recess formed as part of the second portion **20**, or vice versa, providing an interference fit connection between the two portions **18,20**.

The description of the invention is merely exemplary in nature and, thus, variations that do not depart from the gist of the invention are intended to be within the scope of the invention. Such variations are not to be regarded as a departure from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus, comprising:
a sealing device, including:

a first portion;
a first diameter formed as part of the first portion;
a second portion connected to the first portion;
a second diameter formed as part of the second portion;
a tapered portion formed as part of the second portion;
an adhesive located between and connecting the first portion to the second portion;
a leak test aperture;
an upper diameter portion being part of the leak test aperture; and
a lower diameter portion being part of the leak test aperture;
wherein the second diameter is larger than the first diameter, and the sealing device is disposed in the leak test aperture to prevent moisture and debris from passing through the leak test aperture, and the tapered portion is smaller than the second diameter such that the tapered portion is located in the lower diameter portion formed as part of the leak test aperture.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:
an inner surface formed as part of the leak test aperture, the upper diameter portion being part of the inner surface, and the lower diameter portion being part of the inner surface;

wherein the first portion contacts the upper diameter portion of the inner surface and the second portion contacts both the upper diameter portion and the lower diameter portion of the inner surface when the sealing device is disposed in the leak test aperture such that the first portion is in contact with the inner surface to maintain the position of the sealing device in the leak test aperture, and the second portion is in contact with the inner surface to seal the leak test aperture.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first portion is made of metal, and the second portion is made of silicon.

4. An assembly for sealing an aperture, comprising:

a sealing device;
a first portion formed as part of the sealing device, the first portion having a first diameter;
a second portion formed as part of the sealing device such that the first portion is connected to the second portion, the second portion having a second diameter;
a tapered portion formed as part of the second portion, the tapered portion being smaller than the second diameter;

5

- an adhesive located between and connecting the first portion to the second portion; and
- a leak test aperture for selectively receiving the sealing device;
- an upper diameter portion formed as part of the leak test aperture;
- a lower diameter portion formed as part of the leak test aperture;
- wherein the first portion and the second portion are disposed in the leak test aperture such that the tapered portion is disposed in the lower diameter portion, sealing the leak test aperture.
5. The assembly for sealing an aperture of claim 4, further comprising:
- an inner surface formed as part of the leak test aperture, the upper diameter portion being part of the inner surface, and the lower diameter portion being part of the inner surface;
- wherein the first portion is in contact with the upper diameter portion of the inner surface to maintain the position of the sealing device in the leak test aperture, and the second portion is in contact with both the upper diameter portion and the lower diameter portion of the inner surface to seal the leak test aperture.
6. The assembly of claim 5, wherein the first diameter is smaller than the second diameter, and the tapered portion is smaller than the first diameter.
7. The assembly of claim 4, wherein the first portion is made of metal, and the second portion is made of silicon.
8. An assembly for sealing an aperture of an ECU, comprising:
- a sealing device;
- a leak test aperture, the sealing device selectively disposed in the leak test aperture;

6

- an inner surface formed as part of the leak test aperture;
- a first portion having a first diameter, the first portion formed as part of the sealing device;
- a second portion connected to the first portion, the second portion having a second diameter, the second portion formed as part of the sealing device;
- an adhesive located between and connecting the first portion to the second portion;
- a tapered portion formed as part of the second portion, the tapered portion being smaller than the second diameter; and
- an upper diameter portion formed as part of the leak test aperture, the upper diameter portion being part of the inner surface;
- a lower diameter portion formed as part of the leak test aperture, the lower diameter portion being part of the inner surface;
- wherein the sealing device is press-fitted into the leak aperture such that the first diameter is in contact with the upper diameter portion of the inner surface and the second diameter is in contact with both the upper diameter portion and the lower diameter portion of the inner surface such that the tapered portion is disposed in the lower diameter portion of the leak test aperture when the sealing device is disposed in the leak test aperture, preventing moisture and debris from passing through the leak test aperture.
9. The assembly of claim 8, wherein the second diameter is larger than the first diameter such that the second diameter of the second portion applies a pressure to the inner surface of the leak test aperture, forming a seal.
10. The assembly of claim 8, wherein the first portion is made of metal, and the second portion is made of silicon.

* * * * *